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PRESENTED BY

ABRAHAM LINCOLN—THE MAN

Brig.-General SAMUEL W. FOUNTAIN



ABRAHAM LINCOLN

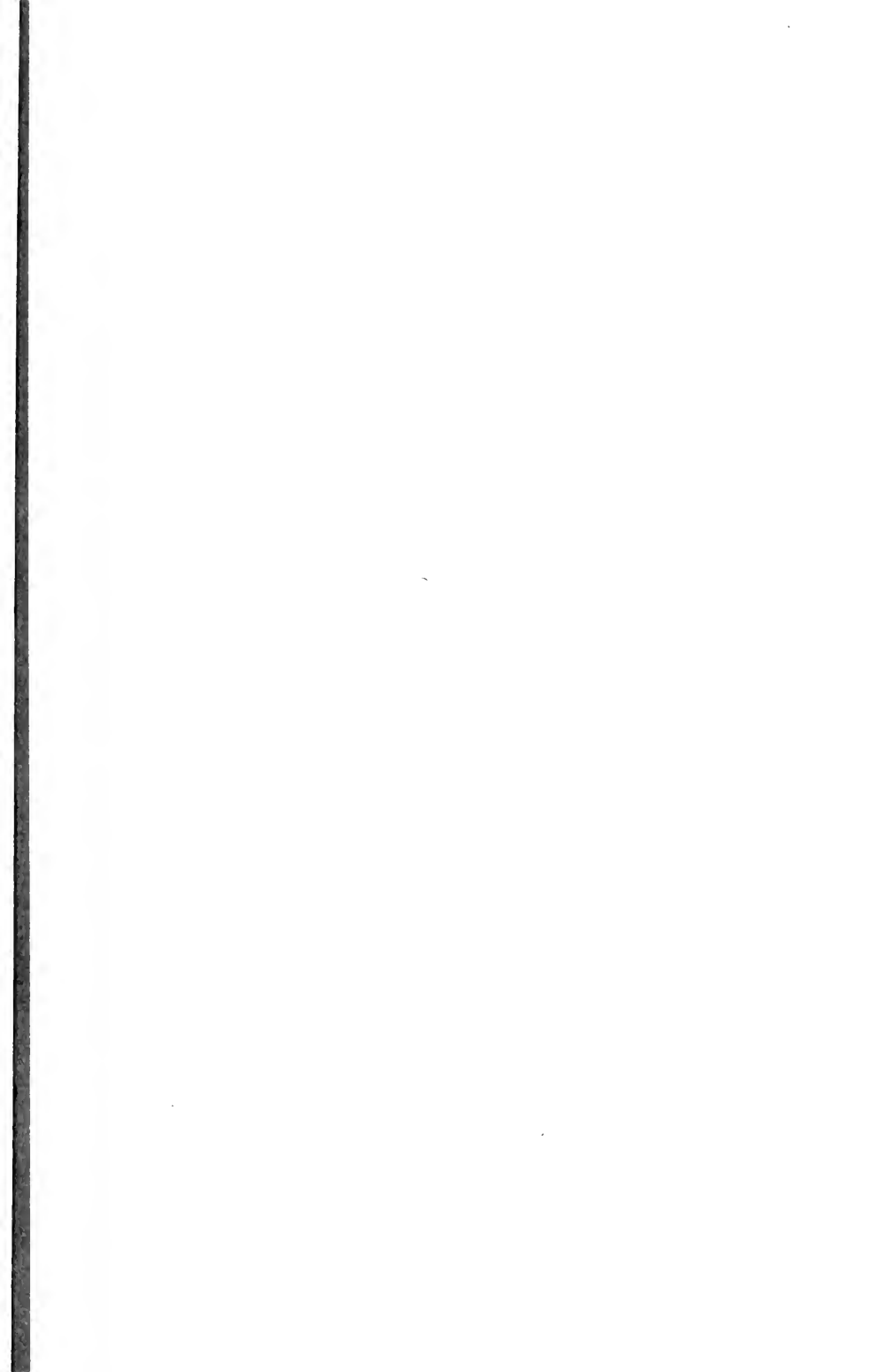
Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States

COMMANDERY OF THE STATE OF PENNSYLVANIA

MEMORIAL MEETING

FEBRUARY 9 1921

1921



Commandery of the State of Pennsylvania
FEBRUARY 9 1921

ABRAHAM LINCOLN
PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES
MARCH 4 1861, TO APRIL 15 1865

Born February 12 1809 in Hardin (La Rue) Co. Kentucky
Assassinated April 14 1865; died April 15 1865, at Washington D. C.
Enrolled by Special Resolution April 16 1865

“ Abraham Lincoln—The Man ”

COMPANION BRIG.-GENERAL SAMUEL W. FOUNTAIN, U. S. A.

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"ABRAHAM LINCOLN—THE MAN"

BY COMPANION BRIG.-GENERAL SAMUEL W. FOUNTAIN, U. S. A.

MR. COMMANDER AND COMPANIONS:

Many years ago at a Fourth of July Celebration, I heard the Orator say, "Liberty has not risen Venus like from the sea foam to smile upon us. The smile of Liberty was won through struggle and death by those whose faces some of us have seen and we are come in gratitude and pride to renew their pledges and to take upon our lips the vow of devotion to the principles for which they held it not hardship even to die." I recall with what awe and reverence I looked upon the older people then present. Had they seen Washington, Patrick Henry, Greene, Schuyler and others, who had fought for and gained our Independence? I feel the same awe and admiration when I look upon our Companions here tonight who may have seen LINCOLN, The Emancipator, The Providential Guardian of the American Union.

I did not see LINCOLN but have always cherished stories about him—some of them I may tell you tonight. None of them can be new. To speak of LINCOLN and to tell the truth one must quote, as I will tonight, from John Hay and others, who have said things of LINCOLN that appeal to me as illustrating his wisdom as a statesman, vision as a leader, firmness and purity of character.

To speak of LINCOLN we should first review in a brief way the conditions surrounding him, what made him or how he made himself. We are told of his boyhood days, spent in poverty and ignorance. Not till he was 18 years of age did the spark that eventually flamed into a torch of genius show sign of its existence. John Hay in writing of Lincoln travestied the notion spread by a few survivors that the pioneers enjoyed a glorious existence. They see it he says, "through a rosy mist of memory, transfigured by the eternal magic of youth." The sober fact is that the life was a hard one, with few rational pleasures, few wholesome appliances. The strong ones lived and some even attained great length of years; but to many, age came early and was full of infirmity and pain.

SAMUEL WARREN FOUNTAIN

Private 140th Ohio Infantry May 2, 1864; discharged September 3, 1864.

Cadet U. S. Military Academy July 1, 1866. Second Lieutenant 8th U. S. Cavalry June 15, 1870; First Lieutenant October 22, 1878; Captain April 11, 1889; Major 9th Cavalry February 2, 1901; Major and Assistant Adjutant General February 28, 1901, to August 26, 1903; Lieut.-Colonel 13th Cavalry August 26, 1903; transferred to 4th Cavalry August 28, 1903; vacated commission April 10, 1905.

Brig.-General U. S. Army April 10, 1905; retired April 11, 1905.

If we could go back to what our fore-fathers endured in clearing the Western Wilderness, we could better appreciate our obligations to them. And he cites a letter from LINCOLN who, at the age of thirty-nine, calls himself an old man.

We must not, however, confuse the pioneers who blazed their way into Indiana, Illinois and the Northwestern Territory with the successive waves of immigrants which latterly have at times threatened to submerge our institutions. The pioneers of Indiana and Illinois, on the other hand, whether they came from Virginia through Kentucky or from Pennsylvania down the Ohio, or from New England direct, had been nourished on certain common principles. Whether they traced their descent from Roundhead or Cavalier, they believed in political and religious liberty. They respected trial by jury and those other safe-guards of the individual, which were the cornerstone of Anglo-Saxon justice. Their fathers had fought in the Revolutionary War to uphold the proposition that there should be no taxation without representation, and they themselves placed passionate trust in popular government.

Young ABRAHAM LINCOLN, as bereft of opportunity for culture as any lad in the country, had access to the Bible and "Pilgrim's Progress", Aesop's Fables and "Robinson Crusoe," and, a little later, to Shakespeare, Burns and Blackstone's Commentaries. With the Bible and Shakespeare one may acquire not only the Anglo-Saxon tradition, but the World's supreme achievements in literature.

No doubt the settlers, men of energy and initiative, were too busy developing the new country to pay much heed to books, but they recognized the need of education in technical concerns and they had not wholly lost the respect for learning as an ideal which had come down to them from their forebears. To them the spoken word was the living word. Lawyers, politicians, preachers, lecturers flourished among them. Politics which involved the interpretation of the Constitution and fundamental conceptions of morals and humanity became their vital interest. Should Slavery be allowed in the new communities? If not, where draw the line of restriction? If the South persisted in slave holding, how long could the Nation survive, half bound and half free? Was not the preservation of the Union more important than the propositions for or against Slavery?

However unequipped with refinements of civilization, a people which, besides conquering for itself a home in the wilderness, was earnestly confronting such questions, could not be charged with stagnation. Nowhere is the greatness of America more finely revealed than in the life Story of ABRAHAM LINCOLN; in that simple but heroic record of struggle and achievement the heart of America speaks. His career is an illustration of the possibilities which America offers to those who strive.

Let us for one moment compare two great Americans, two of the noblest and grandest men our country has produced, WASHINGTON and LINCOLN. They were totally different in circumstance of birth and in fortune of after life, but both were of high character, each put duty before ambition.

Washington was an aristocrat, a man of courtly graces, of demeanor, dignified and exclusive, and one of the richest men of his time.

LINCOLN was of humblest birth and lowliest station, without education save what he wrung from a grinding, grudging life of daily toil, yet he also hewed his way from the rails he split not alone to the President's chair, but to that far higher seat to which none can climb save by moral worth and inward qualities of honor and probity, a seat which they both attained.

The government and history of the United States are the sources from which LINCOLN drew his political ideas. When he was first elected President and on his way to Washington to take office, he stopped at Philadelphia to deliver an address in Independence Hall. In his address he said:

"All political sentiments I entertain have been drawn, so far as I am able to draw them, from the sentiments which originated and were given to the world from this Hall. I have never had a feeling politically that did not spring from the sentiments embodied in the Declaration of Independence."

He declared his firm faith in the great American principle, that the will of the majority must rule. Whoever rejects it does of necessity fly to anarchy or despotism.

He had learned from the rude pioneering experience of his youth the evils and danger of lawlessness. He said with the conviction of one who knew well whereof he spoke: "Let reverence for the law be breathed by every American mother to the lisping babe that prattles on her lap; let it be taught in the schools, in seminaries, in colleges; let it be written in primers, in spelling books and almanacs; let it be preached from the pulpit, proclaimed in legislative halls, and enforced in courts of justice. Let it become the political religion of the Nation."

He believed in honesty, preached it and practised it and early gained the title of "Honest Abe," which clung to him all his life.

Another principle of conduct taught and practised by LINCOLN was that work is a good and not an evil, and that by the exercise of the faculties in daily work, men attain to the best of which they are capable.

LINCOLN believed that men could and should make continual progress. With this in his mind, he said: "There is no such thing as a free man being fixed for life in the condition of hired labor. . . The prudent, penniless beginner in the world labors for wages a while, saves a surplus with which to buy tools or land for himself, then labors on his own account for another while, and at length hires another new beginner to help him. This is the just and generous and prosperous system which opens the way to all, gives hope to all and consequent energy and progress and improvement of condition to all."

LINCOLN firmly believed in the rightousness of private property and in the security of such possession as an encouragement to thrift and enterprise. To the Workmen's Association he said:

"Property is the fruit of labor; property is desirable; it is a positive good in the world. That some should be rich shows that others may become rich, and hence is just encouragement to industry and enterprise. Let him who is houseless not pull down the house of another, but let him work diligently and build one for himself, thus by example assuring that his own shall be safe from violence when built."

For us today the life and teachings of ABRAHAM LINCOLN are full of the highest inspiration. In carrying out the great work that we have before us, that the world may recover from the devastating conflict through which it has just passed, we cannot do better than constantly remember these noble words from his second inaugural address that have become a classic wherever the English tongue is spoken.

"With malice towards none; with charity to all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the Nation's wounds—to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow and his orphan; to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all Nations."

How strangely silent as to many of our deepest and most abiding sentiments would the political history of America appear to us today if it were deprived of the sayings of LINCOLN. In him we feel that our Country has spoken the inmost truth of its political ideas. And so he will always appear to us as the embodiment of those ideas.

When we see his face depicted, we think reverently of the long struggle by which our freedom was maintained; when we read his words we are recalled to those principles on which our freedom is based; when we gather to do him honor we rededicate ourselves to the preservation and perfection of that freedom based upon law whose worth and stability it was the privilege and glory of ABRAHAM LINCOLN to have made manifest to the world.

Was LINCOLN a military genius? I think not. MR. LINCOLN's great mind might have mastered military science, but I do not think that he had given the subject any study. Of course, he thought about field operations and the use of guns on land and sea.

The following letter to General Grant shows that he planned campaigns in his mind and compared them with what the army under its commanders actually did.

Executive Mansion

Washington, July 13th, 1863.

Major General Grant,

My dear General:

I do not remember that you and I ever met personally. I write this now as an acknowledgment for the almost inestimable service you have done the country. I wish to say a word further. When you first reached the vicinity of Vicksburg, I thought you should do, what you finally did—march the troops across the neck, run the batteries with the transports, and then go below; and I never had any faith, except a general hope that you knew better than I, that the Yazoo expedition and the like, could succeed. When you got below and took Port Gibson, Grand Gulf and vicinity, I thought you should go down the river and join Banks; and when you turned northward, east of the Big Black, I feared it was a mistake. I now wish to make the personal acknowledgment that you were right and I was wrong.

Yours very truly,

A. LINCOLN.

Perhaps he was a thorn in McClellan's side and an annoyance to Burnside, Hooker and even our Meade. With Grant there was established a cordial confidence, but not, so I have been told, till Mr. LINCOLN visited Grant's Headquarters at Harrison's Landing just before the Overland Campaign of '64 and '65 was launched. MR. LINCOLN read to General Grant a plan of "On to Richmond." The Army of the Potomac was to take position between the James and York Rivers and march to Richmond while the Navy protected its flanks. General Grant asked for the written plan, thanked the President for it and put it in his pocket and that was as far as that plan of Campaign ever went. I hardly think General Grant was right in treating the President's plan in such a silent but effective manner. He should have told the President that General Lee would put a strong line of troops well intrenched across the neck of land on the Richmond side and then the Army of the Potomac would be bottled up.

Colonel Tunly, who was a Lieutenant in the Army at the breaking out of the War, wrote an interesting sketch of his life and sent copies to his friends. He describes his call upon MR. LINCOLN a few weeks after his first election. MR. LINCOLN spoke freely about the threat of the South to secede, of his duty to maintain the Union and his determination to do so even if he had to call upon a force much larger than the entire Army and Navy, and suggested 75,000 men. Tunly told him such a number could not do it, 250,000 men would not overawe the South and might not be able to conquer them in the field. After his visit Tunly realized that MR. LINCOLN had not expressed surprise at his figures. His comment was that MR. LINCOLN had been figuring himself and had reached such high numbers that he wanted them to be confirmed by a military man.

Some years ago in Kansas City I met Mr. Speed who knew MR. LINCOLN and spoke of him with great affection and admiration. He said some people tell you that LINCOLN died at the peak of his fame; had he lived time would have robbed him of the glamour that the adulation of the whole world had woven about him. But that was not so; it was not possible to shake the solid base upon which LINCOLN's fame was built. Every word and act of LINCOLN was true. There was nothing artificial about him. How could such a reputation be attacked or lessened? It would have grown in grandeur with the years.

Not too often and never too reverently can Americans pause to honor the memory of LINCOLN or express gratitude to the Almighty for his services to his Country. Other men have reunited a divided Nation, or liberated an enslaved race, or carried to conclusion a fratricidal war, or swept immoral institutions from the earth by the exercise of consummate Statesmanship; but no man ever combined and carried through, chiefly by the clarity of his mind and the purity of his character, several such gigantic enterprises in half a decade. Washington welded a handful of colonies into a Confederation of States; LINCOLN fused them, after they had fallen apart, into a self-conscious Nation.

LINCOLN accomplished his stupendous task by transforming his instruments into fellow workers, by inspiring his fellow workers with the passion for responsible leadership, by dedicating himself and his associates to a mission of Divine significance. Under LINCOLN the Civil War was a Crusade for an ethical nationality; under another it might have been a melodramatic carnival of hate and vengeance. Yet when due meed of credit is given to each of his co-laborers, LINCOLN stands

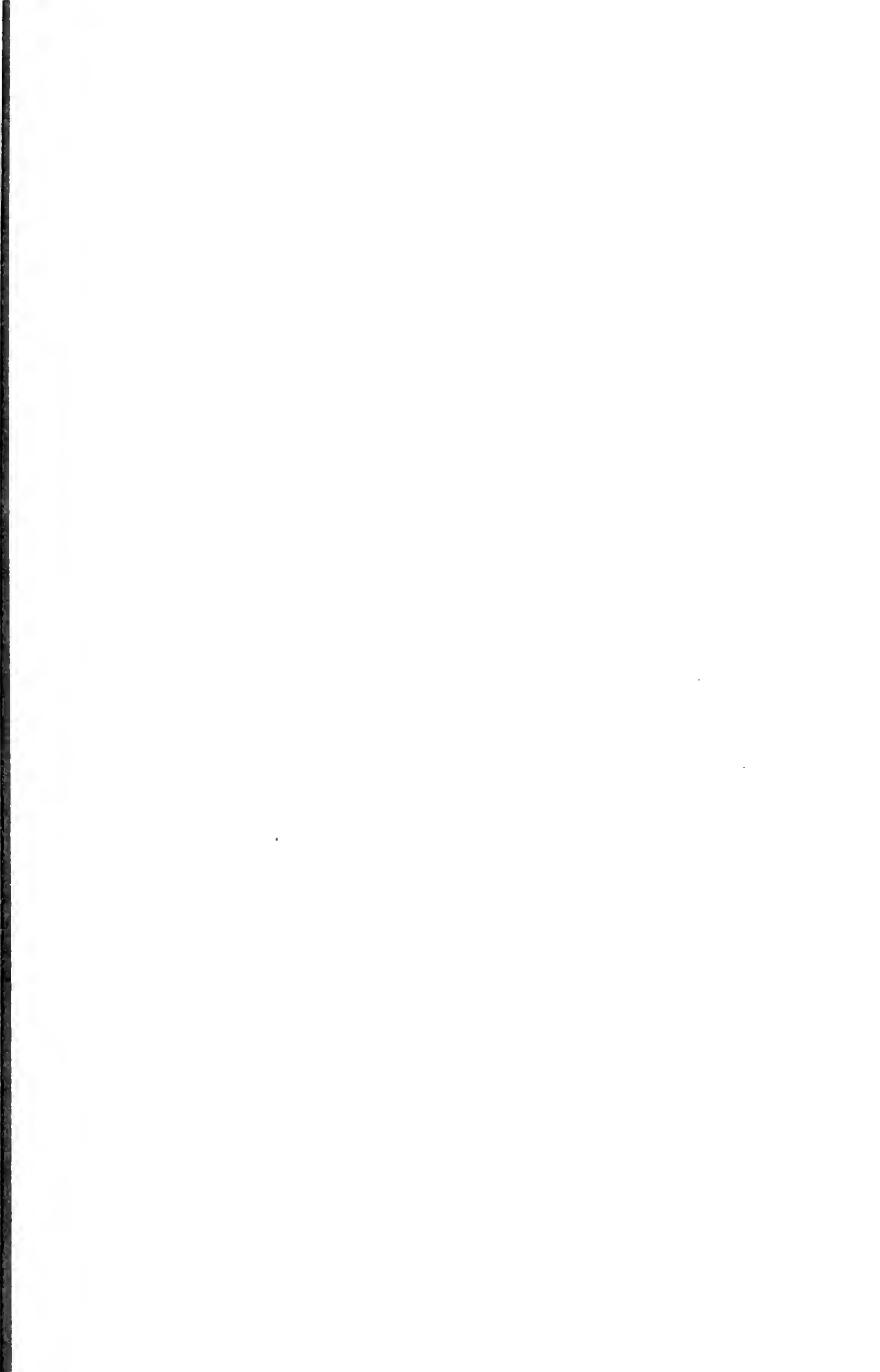
distinctly above them all in solitary strength and unique grandeur. The very greatness of the men who shared with him the awful burden of the hour only enhances his pre-eminence. He was the central star of a brilliant constellation; but it was the power of his personality that held the lesser luminaries in their place, furnished the light that they reflected and marked the course of the great orbit they followed.

There must have been within him an influence mightier than the finest constraints of humanity—"a power not ourselves, that makes for righteousness"—which broke birth's invidious bar and overrode an unpropitious early environment and marked him for a destiny that can be esteemed as nothing less than a Providential guardianship of the American Union. Ambition can make a Napoleon, but not a LINCOLN; for all ambition feeds on a presumption and must sooner or later essay to do what mortal man cannot accomplish—and fail. Genius can make a Beaconsfield, but not a LINCOLN; for genius must always, by the very variety of its skill, pass off many artificial things as natural and must ultimately be the subject of apology. A coercive will, masterful and pertinacious, can make a Bismarck, but not a LINCOLN; for the untempered will, pushing sternly towards its goal, is relentless, ruthless, heartless, unscrupulous and almost barbaric; it may strike the world with fear and wonder—not win it with love.

Rough hewn and elemental he may have been, yet there was about him an air and grace of disposition which won, even in the passionate times of war, the love of the world. Few who have wielded power have merited affection; awe and superstition have given great rulers the adoration or subserviency of a people, but seldom has one with the prerogatives of a despot built himself a shrine, as LINCOLN has, in the heart of the race. His tenure of high office was full of public and private generosity, of magnanimous condescensions to human weakness, of the charity that covers a multitude of sins, of the righteousness that corrects a terrible wrong without leaving a heritage of hatred in the souls of those who were disciplined.

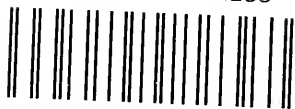
He was a great man raised up by Providence at a time when his Country needed so wise a Statesman, so far sighted a leader, so pure a man. He did not know many happy days. As President he was weighted down by vast responsibilities that seldom left him in sleep. He was essentially a religious man, with a heart overflowing with confidence in the mercy of his Creator and the watchfulness of Heaven over the destiny of this republic. As time rolls by, his name will grow in fragrance and the nobility of his character stand out more clearly. Let him be remembered, not as a partisan, but as a man who loved his Country and his kind.







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